Certainly, too, the influence of Christianity was only one factor, and probably a minor one, in bringing about the movement. Although to the last the leaders professed adherence to thatlaith which was so "strange a compound of Christianity and Chinese beliefs and practices, what impelled the bulk of the'rank and file of the T'ai P'ings was discontent with exi^mgj:onditions, the love of adventure," and the desire for plunder. Religious fanaticism was only one of the ingredients. To 'understand the T'ai P'ings one must recall the economic^pressure and the secret, societies which are so constant a feature in Chinese society, and the oppression and incompetence which characterized so much of the local government in the years of the decay of the Ch'ing, the chronic jealousy of and hostility to the Manchus, and the traditional trend toward revolt whenever a dynasty showed signs of weakness. One must remember, too, the tendency of Chinese rebellions, since at least the last years of the Han, to take on the guise of religious

Had Hung displayed any very great genius for organization or political leadership, the T'ai P'ings might well h^ve overthrown the Manchus, for tire latter, suffering from the humiliating defeat at the hands of Gi^p Britain and harassed by smaller uprisings, were lamentably weak. However, he proved to be singularly lacking in the needed kind of ability, and after one raid which carried them almost to Tientsin, the T'ai P'ings never seriously threatened the Manchus' possession of the North. Moreover, their religious tenets and fanaticism and their wholesale destructiveness antagonized the influential classes and made impossible the winning of the assent of the nation to their rule. Still,

the CMng dynasty was so weak and so distraught by the attacks of the French and English, that the T'ai P'ings, aided by able generals who came to the fore in 1858 and by tapping new territory and hence new resources *(ca.* 1860), managed to hold Nanking for more than a decade and to devastate some of the fairest sections of the Yangtze Valley. Not until 186S, as we shall see in the next chapter, was Peking able to overthrow them and then only because of Chinese and foreign assistance.

The T'ai P'ings were not the only rebels who brought anxiety to the dynasty. Indeed, the foregoing paragraphs have probably given them proportionately too great attention. Because of their